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# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**8080th meeting**
Monday, 30 October 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Mr. Le Drian/Mr. Delattre | (France) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Llorentty Solíz |
| | China | Mr. Wu Haitao |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | Italy | Mr. Cardi |
| | Japan | Mr. Bessho |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Ali |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Nebenzia |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Sweden | Ms. Wallström |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Kyslytsya |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Baron Ahmad |
| | United States of America | Mrs. Haley |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Rosselli |

## Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2017/869)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Peace and security in Africa**

**Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2017/869)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, Ministers and other representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and Mr. Angel Losada Fernández, European Union Special Representative for the Sahel.

Mr. Mahamat will be joining us via video-teleconference from Pretoria.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item of the agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/869, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and give him the floor.

**The Secretary-General** (*spoke in French*): I thank the French Government for initiating today's debate, which follows the Security Council's visit to the Sahel. I also thank the Ministers of the States members of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) for their presence today.

Allow me to pay tribute to the three Chadian Blue Helmets of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) who died on Thursday, as well as to their wounded colleagues. I commend their courage and dedication to restoring peace and security to Mali. Their sense of sacrifice compels us to urgently find solutions to help us combat terrorism in Mali, while ensuring the security and safety of MINUSMA contingents.

The situation in the Sahel challenges us all. Poverty, underdevelopment and climate change have contributed to the humanitarian and security crises. The weakness of institutions and the exclusion and marginalization of some groups are exploited by extremists and terrorists. Porous borders facilitate trafficking in human beings, drug and arms trafficking and other criminal activities. The recent deadly attacks on Nigerian gendarmes and American soldiers, as well as the unremitting attacks on the Malian defence and security forces, MINUSMA peacekeepers and Force Barkhane soldiers, illustrate the scale of the security threat.

The humanitarian crisis is deteriorating. Nearly 5 million people have been displaced and 24 million need humanitarian aid. Birth rates are among the highest in the world, yet millions of Sahelian children do not have access to health care and do not go to school.

Given the urgency of the situation, we must come up with innovative actions in support of the G-5 Sahel's efforts not only in the security field, but also in the areas of development and governance. Time is not on our side. We must urgently align our efforts in order to remedy the root causes of instability in the region. The creation of the Joint Force demonstrates the willingness of the countries of the G-5 Sahel to cooperate closely in order to jointly address the threat.

Today, we have the opportunity to support them and, together, reverse the course of events. We owe it to the people of the Sahel. We also owe it to the States of the G-5 Sahel, which have taken that courageous initiative. At the time of their appeal, I supported the creation of a force with long-term financing and a mandate commensurate with the threats it would face. We owe it to all those who have paid with their lives. Their selfless commitment against the terrorist threat and peace in the Sahel compel us.

Given the rapid evolution of the situation and the risks of widespread spillover, failure to act could have serious consequences for the region and beyond. Therefore, I invite the Council to be ambitious in the choices it has to make. Strong political support for the G-5 Sahel and material and operational support commensurate with the current challenges are essential.

The Security Council has four options, as set out in my report (S/2017/869). The United Nations could quickly mobilize essential support, complementing the work of bilateral partners. Such support would not only serve to reinforce the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, but would also help to mitigate the threats that directly affect MINUSMA. Like MINUSMA, the Joint Force will operate in support of the Malian peace process. The two forces are deeply complementary and mutually reinforcing. But only the comprehensive implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali could restore the State's authority and stability. I renew my appeal to the signatory parties to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement and its key institutional reforms.

During my last informal meeting with the Council, I had the opportunity to share my opinions and preferences. Naturally, whatever the Council decides to do, the Secretariat will do its best to support the G-5 Sahel within the framework defined by the Council. That support to the Joint Force would also be part of the strategic partnership to strengthen African responses to crises on the continent. When we talk about strategic partnership, it must ensure mutual commitment accompanied by guarantees, criteria and indicators of success agreed by the countries of the G-5 Sahel and international partners.

The countries of the G-5 Sahel have set specific goals and made remarkable progress towards achieving them over the past few months, be it in the elaboration of a concept of operations, bringing certain domestic instruments and normative frameworks into conformity, or the provision of national resources and the mobilization of regional and international partners. All of those efforts demonstrate the political resolve to define a strategy and take the steps necessary to implement it. However, certain aspects should be further clarified and consolidated.

With that in mind, I have presented recommendations to strengthen the political leadership of the Joint Force and its integration into the African peace and security architecture. I have also suggested introducing transparent and credible monitoring and follow-up mechanisms that could strengthen the legitimacy and the political framework of the Joint Force, as well as the support of the region and its partners. In particular, it is essential to establish control mechanisms to ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in the context of military operations. The African Union and the United Nations can support the G-5 Sahel in establishing adequate monitoring systems, with the support of partners, including the European Union. In that regard, it is urgent to define the modalities of cross-border prosecutions, arrests, detentions, legal proceedings, risk reduction and the broader protection of civilians. I encourage States members of the G-5 Sahel to work to finalize the concept of operations and to clarify the objectives and timing of the force generation of the Joint Force.

Security cooperation in the Sahel is essential, but only a multidimensional response can end instability. I have instructed the Deputy Secretary-General to coordinate and revitalize the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We must together strengthen our efforts in favour of governance, development and resilience. To that end, at the Brussels Conference in December, we will present an investment strategy for the region, and I hope to be able to count on the support of all our partners. I would also like to call for greater coherence among the various national, regional and international initiatives in place. Only an effective presence and a strengthening of the rule of law will make it possible to ensure the continuity of these initiatives. In such a difficult and complex context, it is also important to support the efforts of humanitarian staff and agencies working to promote sustainable development.

Since I took office, prevention has been my absolute priority. In the Sahel, this means preventing the region from falling into a state of chaos, which could have dangerous consequences for the continent and the world as a whole. I therefore call for a win-win partnership and a framework of shared responsibility that will formalizes our mutual obligations so as to address the root causes of the crisis.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of Mali.

**Mr. Diop** (Mali) (*spoke in French*): In my capacity as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), and on behalf of my colleagues from Burkina Faso, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad who are present here today, I am particularly pleased to address our sincere gratitude to the President of the Council for the generous invitation to participate

in this morning's meeting and to say how delighted we are to see France presiding over this important meeting to discuss the situation in the Sahel.

At the outset, I would like to thank France for having made the Sahel the priority of its presidency of the Security Council, and I would like particularly to commend the French delegation, under the leadership of Ambassador François Delattre, for the very able way in which it has steered the work of the Security Council throughout this month of October. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the outstanding work of Ambassador Tekeda Alemu of Ethiopia and his delegation during their presidency of the Council last month. We eagerly look forward to the Italian presidency of the Council that will begin in the next few days.

As I was leaving Bamako, the Secretary-General's friend, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, asked me to convey to him his boundless gratitude, and to do so also on behalf of his fellow Presidents of Burkina Faso, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad, for both his personal commitment and that of the United Nations in seeking to advance stability and development in the countries of the Sahel. The Secretary-General's presence at this morning's meeting, along with the apposite report he has submitted on the operationalization and activities of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2017/869) reflect his unflagging dedication. The States members of the G-5 Sahel welcome the analysis and recommendations contained in the report before us.

There can be no doubt that this meeting is taking place at the perfect time, given that the current situation in the Sahel remains volatile, as the region is sadly dominated by terrorist attacks and various forms of organized crime that regularly plague our people as well as foreign and national security forces, and, in so doing, undermine all our development efforts. I would like to thank all the members of the Security Council for their visit to three of the five countries of the Sahel. This visit was designed to allow them to assess with us the situation on the ground and evaluate the ways and means of supporting the decisions taken by our Heads of State to ward off the multiple threats in our common area.

The visit of the Security Council, as well as the visit that took place in Niger and Chad previously — from 1 to 7 March — fulfilled our expectations, because through the meetings it had with Heads of State, Governments, military authorities and members of civil society of our respective countries, the delegation of the Security Council had an opportunity to better understand the urgent need to support the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel so as to alleviate the suffering of our populations and to contribute to the stability and development in the Sahel. Indeed, the security threat looming over our States is a challenge that we share with the rest of the world, given its causes, manifestations and direct impact on international peace and security. As such, it requires a collective response of the international community, and we are pleased to note that the Security Council and the Secretary-General share this sense of collective responsibility.

As far as we are concerned, the establishment of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel represents a collective response by our countries to address the common threats of terrorism, violent extremism and trafficking in all its forms, including migrant smuggling. I recall in this regard that the Joint Force has been endorsed by the African Union and is fully compliant and aligned with the African architecture of peace and security, and that it also enjoys the support of the Security Council, specifically through its resolution 2359 (2017).

At this stage, I would like to emphasize that the actions of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel are intended to and do complement those of other forces already operating in the region, namely, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the French Operation Barkhane. Force generation for the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel will create the conditions and an environment favourable for MINUSMA's implementation of its mandate. In addition, the Joint Force's strategic concept of operations provides for coordination and articulation mechanisms between the United Nations peacekeeping mission and this African peacekeeping operation.

Today more than ever, we are determined to make the Joint Force fully operational. Considerable progress has already been made by the G-5 Sahel States in the process of deploying the Joint Force, with the welcome support of the African Union and our partners. And we have made this progress, despite the challenges on several fronts that remain to be met.

One step forward that has been taken in setting up the Joint Force was the inauguration, on 9 September, by His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President-in-Office of the G-5 Sahel, of the Joint Force

headquarters in Sevaré, Mali. The visit of the Security Council delegation on 22 October gave Council members an opportunity to witness first hand that the Headquarters are fully functional. Headquarters for the Joint Force's central sector are also up and running in Niamey, and steps are being taken for establishing headquarters for the eastern sector in Wour, Chad, and for the western sector in Nbeiket el-Ahouach, Mauritania. I would also draw attention to the fact that the mobilization of troops needed for the battalion strength we have set for ourselves and their equipment has been carried out on the basis of funds provided by Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger. The first joint cross-border operations in the central sector will soon be launched.

However, in order to achieve full operational capability by March 2018, the Joint Force will need substantial bilateral and multilateral support so as to mobilize sustainable and predictable resources. This is the purpose of our request for multilateral support, including through the United Nations, because this remains the only option that will ensure the predictability and sustainability of resources and the operational support needed for the Joint Force on the ground.

I recall that the €423 million budget was arrived at on the basis of a realistic and objective assessment of the Force's needs. I take this opportunity to appeal to all our bilateral and multilateral partners to participate in the international conference on security and development in the Sahel, scheduled for 14 December, which is being organized jointly with the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union. I thank the European institutions for agreeing to host this important meeting. I welcome the contributions that have already been pledged by the European Union, France, Germany and Denmark, and I encourage other countries to do the same.

In addition to the issue of financing, the Joint Force will also require support in such areas as infrastructure development, information and communication technology, anti-improvised-explosive-ordnance equipment, training, medical training and medical-evacuation capacity as well as air and land transport.

The G-5 Sahel countries welcome the options proposed by the Secretary-General within the framework of United Nations support for the Joint Force because we believe that those options, in particular the first option, provide a good basis for addressing the current and pressing needs of the Force. I welcome the commitment of the Secretary-General to helping to provide the necessary resources and support for the Joint Force, and I call on the Security Council to do the same as soon as possible, in particular at the multilateral level. We favour the establishment of a mechanism to oversee the transparent management of resources used by the Force. Similarly, we remain open to all proposals aimed at strengthening the institutional architecture and planning and coordination capacities of the Joint Force, including the deployment of experts from the United Nations and other partner organizations to the permanent secretariat of the G-5 Sahel.

I also welcome the Secretary-General's support for the establishment of a G-5 Sahel support group to promote the coordination of international support, in line with the Force's strategic concept of operations. The States members of the G-5 Sahel fully align themselves with the Secretary-General's call on the Security Council to adopt

> "a robust mandate commensurate with the serious threats that the Joint Force will need to address" (*S/2017/869, para. 83*)

with a view to strengthening the latter's capacity so that it can fully achieve its goals. In that regard, I would like to give my assurance that that the Joint Force's operations are being carried out in strict compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law. That is a matter of the utmost importance for our Heads of State, our peoples and all of us, as the success of the Joint Force will require the full support of our populace. We have therefore planned establishing a civilian component within the Joint Force that will be dedicated to human rights compliance, as the Security Council mission was able to see for itself at the field headquarters meeting. We remain open to all forms of support in the area of human rights.

I would like to firmly stress that the G-5 Sahel is not focused solely on the security dimension. In parallel with the security aspect, which I have just mentioned, the G-5 Sahel also accords a high level of importance to development issues and good governance, as well as the resilience of its people. The deployment of the Joint Force is simply aimed at establishing the conditions necessary for development, security and peace in our region because we know that there can be no lasting

peace without development, and vice versa. We therefore fully agree with the Secretary-General that the security role of the Joint Force must be complemented by initiatives in the area of development. That is the raison d'être of the Priority Investment Programme, as well as that of Alliance for the Sahel, which is aimed at promoting economic, social and cultural development, as well as deradicalization.

In keeping with the Secretary-General's statement, in my national capacity and on behalf of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, I reiterate the commitment of the Government of Mali to expediting the full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process, and in that regard I welcome the adoption of resolution 2374 (2017), which established a sanctions regime in Mali.

In conclusion, I underscore once again that the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel is of great concern. Our people are undergoing severe hardships in their daily lives because of increasing insecurity, and the very foundations of our States are threatened. The very survival of our States is at stake. The stability of the region is in the balance, and international peace and security are also threatened. The resolve of the international community aimed at containing the regional and international threat is urgently needed. Our five Heads of State have played their part in providing the Joint Force with the resources at their disposal in a regional response to those transnational threats.

We must not allow this opportunity to elude us. We hope that the Security Council will also carry out its primary responsibility by following the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General's report before it. I thank the members of the Security Council for the urgent attention that they will give to this urgent request from our leaders and people.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Mahamat.

**Mr. Mahamat** (*spoke in French*): To begin, I welcome the holding of this ministerial-level meeting of the Security Council on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). I want to thank the French presidency of the Council for having taken the initiative, and the members of the Council for their commitment not only to the issue before it today, but to other important issues involving peace and security in Africa.

Since I assumed my functions as Chairperson of the African Union Commission, I have sought, together with my colleagues, Mr. Smaïl Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union (AU), and Cessouma Minata Samate, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, to visit the G-5 countries. The idea was not only to show the solidarity of the African Union with the region in its fight against the scourge of terrorism and organized transnational crime, but also to contribute to promoting greater international awareness of the challenges facing us.

Today's meeting is extremely timely. It attests to the increasing focus of the international community on the current situation in the Sahel-Saharan region. Despite their limited resources and the complex problems facing them, the countries of the G-5 Sahel have clearly demonstrated their willingness to meet those challenges. I commend the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel countries for their determination and perseverance. It is incumbent upon the international community to support them by virtue of the solidarity that binds its members together. In so doing, of course, the international community will also be acting in its own interest.

Let us make no mistake — what is at stake is not only the security of the countries of the Sahel, but also the security of countries of the many regions throughout the world, because the scourges at hand truly know no borders. They must be combated vigorously and with the urgency that the situation calls for. That underlines the critical nature of the contribution of the entire international community. The United Nations — our shared home — is an ideal setting to address those issues in a spirit of solidarity. Indeed, this forum endows regional efforts with the legitimacy that we all recognize as essential.

It will also be a guarantee of effectiveness, making it possible to combine judiciously the efforts of the countries of the G-5 Sahel and those of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the personnel of which pays a heavy price every day in service to peace in Mali. It is the ideal complement to multilateral and bilateral assistance, allowing for coherent and effective international assistance. I pay tribute to the multilateral and bilateral partners, including the European Union, which has already provided assistance to the countries of the G-5.

The African Union welcomed the adoption on 21 June of resolution 2359 (2017), in which the Security Council welcomes the deployment of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel. We also welcome the powerful signal sent through the visit by the Security Council to the Sahel countries and the spirit of commitment and solidarity at its heart. The hopes that have been raised must not be disappointed. I am convinced that Council members are committed and have heard the message addressed to them from the region. I address Council members, certain that they will demonstrate once again their determination to assume their responsibility to maintain international peace and security. I address members in the hope that they will concretize the idea of prevention; in truth, we are dealing with a threat that could become much greater if it is not dealt with here and now.

Through its Peace and Security Council, in April the African Union endorsed the strategic concept of operations of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel and authorized its deployment for an initial, renewable period of 12 months. At the same time, we clearly expressed our expectations regarding the contribution of the United Nations through the establishment of a financial support module through statutory contributions to the operating budget of the Joint Force. I reiterate that request because, in the face of the terrorist threat and the threat it poses to the stability of the region as a whole, half measures will not be sufficient. I note with satisfaction that this option is included in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/869) that members have before them.

The African Union fully endorses the appeal of the Secretary-General to the Council to be ambitious, bearing in mind that only predictable and sustainable financial support will allow the Joint Force to contribute sustainably to the stability of the region. We also note with satisfaction the measures envisioned by the United Nations to support the secretariat of the G-5. The African Union will continue to work closely with the G-5 in order to support the technical efforts already provided through a series of measures, including by sharing our experience in combating insurrections in Somalia, galvanizing the Nouakchott process, which brings together all the countries of the region, actively participating in the support groups provided for in the strategic concept of operations of the Joint Force, and through sustained advocacy efforts to raise the required funds.

The operationalization of the Joint Force must go hand in hand with accelerated implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Significant progress has been achieved, and the Malian stakeholders must be given credit for that; however, much remains to be done. The completion of the implementation of the Agreement will make it possible to further isolate terrorist and criminal groups. The Malian parties must further step up their efforts. The African Union, including through its High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, Mr. Pierre Buyoya, will continue to work alongside them in that task.

Putting a decisive end to criminal and terrorist groups in the Sahelo-Saharan region will also require sustained efforts in the areas of development and governance. We commend the efforts of the G-5 countries in that regard and encourage them to persevere in their efforts. We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to revitalize the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohamed. We are convinced that, thanks to her commitment, no effort will be spared to ensure that the Strategy fully meets the expectations of the countries of the region. The African Union will take the steps necessary to give new momentum to its strategy for the Sahel and to strengthen the implementation in the region of the various instruments that it has adopted in the areas of governance, democracy and respect for human rights.

I cannot conclude my statement without paying strong tribute once again to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. His report and the recommendations contained therein, as well as his support for the G-5 are further evidence of the vision that guides him and his determination to spare no effort to adapt the United Nations to the security challenges we face. We fully share that vision and will do everything in our power to help him shoulder the crushing weight of his responsibility.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Mahamat for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Losada Fernández.

**Mr. Losada Fernández** (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all, Mr. President, to thank you for the opportunity given to the European Union to participate in Security Council discussions on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). This is

without a doubt the most appropriate forum to provide long-term support to our brothers in the G-5 Sahel.

This meeting is doubly important. On the one hand, it helps to keep the Sahel at the top of the international agenda; on the other, it is an important step in the rise of that African force, which, as the Secretary-General emphasizes in his report (S/2017/869) and reiterated this morning, urgently needs our support. Security in the Sahel is the security of all. Accordingly, there can be no lasting stability in the Sahel without the full, effective and inclusive implementation of the provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Allow me to raise three points.

First, I must pay tribute to the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel, the United Nations and the security actors on the ground, whose remarkable work has been carried out often under very difficult circumstances. The recent attacks in northern and central Mali, as well as on the Nigerian border, demonstrate that very clearly. I would also like to pay tribute to all the Blue Helmets of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, Operation Barkhane troops, European and American soldiers and soldiers of the Group of Five for the Sahel, including recently our Chadian friends, who made the ultimate sacrifice for security in the Sahel, Mali and the neighbouring countries.

I would also like to underscore the outstanding work that has been done by the military staffs of the G-5 Sahel countries since the summit of the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel in February 2017, held in Bamako. In just a few months, a concept of operations was validated by the African Union, and then incorporated into resolution 2359 (2017) to achieve an initial operational capability and also, according to the information provided, to conduct the first joint operation, which was conducted in the past few days in the central strategic corridor. There are of course still challenges in terms of equipment, but also financially, for this force to become fully operational. I understand that work on the civilian and judicial component, on respect for human rights, gender and on the link between the Joint Force and the local populations, including by explaining the mandate of the force, are also under way. We actively encourage those efforts.

The second point is that I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his excellent report on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and his commendable personal commitment. We fully share his analysis of the situation in the region and the challenges that we will all need to face together. We also welcome the options that have been proposed that will have to be implemented gradually to eradicate the terrorist threat; to deal with the Libyan crisis; to prevent and contain the violence around the Lake Chad basin and northern Mali; to cope with the growing expenditures of the G-5 Sahel States on security; to ensure better border control in order to avoid exploitation of human beings and the trafficking in drugs and weapons that finance terrorism; and, finally, to contribute to the socioeconomic development of a region with a high proportion of youth who legitimately have ambitions for their future and better opportunities. All those are challenges that we face today and will face in the years to come.

With regard to this analysis of the situation, from the very start, the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel reached similar conclusions. From the outset, they committed to providing a response, such as the establishment of the Force, whose goals, let us recall, range from combating terrorism and organized crime to supporting development efforts, including the re-establishment of the authority of the State in the areas that are most fragile and isolated, as well as facilitating humanitarian operations. Early on, G-5 Sahel countries shared their concerns with us. Immediately, Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, responded to them by offering support to their efforts during the announcement of the Joint Force in N'Djamena in November 2015.

On the third point, the European Union and its member States, the top donors in Africa, have already provided support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. They will continue to extend that support. They are already involved in a large number of projects that can provide support and facilitate the deployment of the Force, including to facilitate contacts with local populations. That comprehensive approach was embodied 2011 European Union strategy for security and development in the Sahel, which underscores the security-development nexus that is essential to guarantee stability in the region.

During the third ministerial meeting of the European Union and the G-5 Sahel, held on 5 June 2017, Ms. Mogherini announced the European Union's support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force through an initial

contribution of €50 million from the European Union African Peace Facility, including as well by mobilizing support from the European Union Common Security and Defence Policy missions that are deployed in the region.

With the support of the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali), the initial requests of the G-5 Sahel General Staff are being processed. The question of respect for human rights, including the protection of children serving in armed groups as well as gender issues, are key points in our continuing commitment to the Force. The training of the Malian armed forces provided by EUTM Mali are conducted, I would just remind Council members, in the framework of international standards for human rights.

In Brussels, and following the meetings in Paris and Berlin over the past few months, we are also working on the issue of mobilizing and coordinating the efforts of the international community for the benefit of the Joint Force. To that end, and in the wake of the announcements made on the sidelines of the General Assembly last September, in which Ms. Mogherini participated, on 14 December we will organize in Brussels, together with Mali's chairmanship of the G-5 Sahel, a conference of Heads of State and Government on security and development in the Sahel. The meeting, which will bring together a large part of the international community, will be an opportunity to raise additional funding to scale up the Joint Force and to make it fully operational, including its civilian component, in response to the commitment undertaken by the G-5 Sahel countries and in line with resolution 2359 (2017). The European Union has taken steps to provide direct support for requests of the Joint Force. That mechanism is operational and open to contributions from the international community. Also, the conference will be an opportunity to address the issue of development and take into account the work that has been done in the past few months in the framework of the alliance that is now called "Alliance With the Sahel", instead of "Alliance for the Sahel."

I therefore welcome this meeting in New York today. I trust in our spirit of solidarity, which I have no doubt will make ensure that we are on the same track to take up the challenges that we face. Along the same lines, I am sure that the Brussels conference will be a success.

I will conclude by quoting Ms. Mogherini, who summarizes our willingness and approach, both in security and development terms: "we do not work for Africa, we work with Africa".

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Losada Fernández for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France.

At the outset, allow me to thank the Secretary-General, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mali, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the observer of the European Commission for their respective briefings. I also thank the Secretary-General for the submission of his report (S/2017/869) on how we can ramp up force generation for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). Following the Security Council's 10-day visit to the Sahel, his report provides us with a very solid basis for discussion as we pursue talks on how we can support this exemplary initiative.

The situation today is unambiguous: terrorist groups in the Sahel today represent a global threat, both for the stability of the region but also to international security. Terrorists take advantage our weaknesses and our divisions. They are financed by drug trafficking and human trafficking. On repeated occasions, they have demonstrated their ability to strike in Mali, the Niger and Burkina Faso, as well as their determination to expand to neighbouring countries. The threat has not spared our nationals and our forces, who are waging the war by the sides of our Sahel partners in the region. This situation has a direct impact on the security of many other countries beyond the Sahel — in Africa, Europe and in the world as a whole. It therefore requires a clear, strong and coordinated response by the United Nations, and indeed by all of us.

The G-5 Sahel Joint Force is a proper response to the challenge. When faced with a threat that makes a mockery of borders, the response must be organized among neighbouring States on a cross-border basis. This is what makes the Joint Force such an exemplary initiative. It deserves our support as it seeks to expand its operational capacity in order to respond to the regional terrorist threat. By combining their forces with the explicit goal of securing their borders and equipping themselves with the means to succeed, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad are clearly seeking to complement efforts already under way by

the international community in the region. In that regard, I refer to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the European Union capacity-building and training missions, which have made it possible to rebuild Mali's military and security forces. I would of course also mention the 4,000 soldiers of Operation Barkhane.

The G-5 Sahel Joint Force should enable MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane to focus on the core areas of their respective mandates, as requested by the Government of Mali, in order to gain even greater efficiency. That is why the G-5 Sahel Joint Force must gradually improve its ability to tackle terrorism and trafficking.

The Security Council's recent visit to the Sahel revealed the current status of the Joint Force, which is now operational in the region's central zone where it is undertaking its first operation. The visit assessed the Force's need and potential, with armed forces rapidly increasing their interoperability, and also verified the seriousness and determination of the G-5 Sahel States in implementing the Joint Force initiative. I would like to commend the representatives of each of those five States. Their commitment is the key to success. I want to say once again that they have the full support of France.

The initiative is still young. There are a number of remaining challenges that must be overcome before it becomes fully active in all three of the region's time zones. It must also respond to the challenges posed in terms of respect for human rights, without which the fight against terrorism cannot be effective. Nevertheless, it is clear that today, eight months after the initial announcement, the Joint Force is a reality. It is beginning its operations in the central zone, which is where it must play its first major role.

The question is no longer whether the international community should support the response of the G-5 Sahel States. I think I can safely say that we are now all firmly convinced. We must now ask ourselves how we can help, without taking away from the G-5 Sahel States their primary responsibility for securing their borders. Bilateral support, as pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General, remains crucial in helping the Joint Force to reach its full potential. In that regard, France is playing its full part in contributing to that effort, which must be collective, through the material and technical support provided by Operation Barkhane and its security and defence cooperation framework. The European Union has also mobilized support by immediately deciding to provide substantial aid of €50 million to support the launch of the Joint Force.

I call on our partners to play their full part in supporting this vital effort, especially in view of the planning conference to be held in Brussels on 14 December. At that conference, announcements that are as significant and concrete as possible are expected to be made. However, we must also develop multilateral aid. That would provide long-term operational and logistical support to the Joint Force and would represent an important signal of the international community's support for the G-5 Sahel countries in their struggle against terrorist groups.

The report of the Secretary-General offers us well defined options for possible support. It is an ambitious report, and for that I want to thank the Secretary-General. It will be up to us, over the coming days, to put the report to good use and render it operationally applicable. The Security Council, and through it the international community, must rise to the challenges faced by the States of the region in order to fight terrorism together.

The Security Council must support the increasing operational capacity of the Joint Force. First, it must do so by playing its full role in the mobilization of the international community to support the initiative, but also by thinking about forms of multilateral support as proposed by the Secretary-General. The Joint Force's logistical support options, as currently conceived by MINUSMA, must be studied as quickly as possible, as proposed in the Secretary-General's report. I am convinced that that support can be implemented without altering the capacity of MINUSMA's peacekeeping operation. I would therefore like to invite participants to consider the options openly.

Let us be ambitious, but also pragmatic and realistic, as is the approach of the Secretary-General's report. The key is to get off to a good start and sustain the initial build-up of the Joint Force. It will be up to us to then make a progress report with the G-5 Sahel countries and decide how to develop support based on the results obtained by our partners on the ground. However, we must not be found wanting during these initial stages, which is why we are meeting today to chart the path we take with the G-5 Sahel countries. We will have to support the G-5 Sahel Joint Force

by supporting the planning conference to be held in Brussels.

Of course, given the threats facing the Sahel, the answer is not only of a security nature. There can be no lasting peace without sustainable development. An additional effort in that area must therefore be undertaken to stabilize the region. France is fully aware of that, which is why it is spearheading the Alliance With the Sahel project, together with Germany, the European Union, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. The project aims to achieve significant and swift results in key development areas, such as youth employability, agriculture, energy, governance and security. Without a guarantee of access to education and a brighter future, we will not be able to prevent many young people from falling into desperation and into the clutches of terrorist groups.

Finally, all those efforts require us to fully implement the peace process in Mali. I appeal again today to the responsibility of all those concerned. I also call for the necessary efforts of governance and dialogue with the communities concerned in the area where the G-5 Sahel Joint Force will be deployed, especially on the borders of Mali, the Niger and Burkina Faso.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

**Ms. Wallström** (Sweden): The situation in the Sahel is a source of increasing concern, as has been stated by all prior speakers. It has implications not only for the millions of people facing insecurity and hunger, but also for the wider region and globally. The root causes are complex and transboundary. The effects of the spread of violent extremism, organized crime, climate change, a worsening human rights situation and weak institutions are mutually reinforcing. They are having devastating consequences for the people of the Sahel and show the limits of traditional peacekeeping. In response, a combination of short- and long-term efforts must be applied. Sweden is heavily engaged with its development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, as well as its contribution to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the European Union missions.

Stability in Mali is critical for the Sahel as a whole. Supporting the full, inclusive and effective implementation of the peace agreement must remain a priority, particularly in view of the upcoming elections. It is our best chance to build sustained peace and prevent the further spread of instability. The sanctions regime established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) should be an active tool in our endeavours to achieve peace and stability in Mali. However, sanctions are not an end in themselves; they are a means of encouraging political momentum.

Allow me to dwell for a moment on the issue of inclusivity. During their recent visit to Mali, members of the Security Council met with women civil society representatives. When they were asked whether they had access to the political leadership in their country, they responded that they did not only want access to politicians; rather, they wanted to become decision-makers in their own right, represented on equal terms with men. As we discussed on Friday (see S/PV.8079), women's representation is not just a question of fairness; it is a matter of effectiveness and of increasing the probability of a lasting peace agreement.

However, when you fear leaving your house to fetch water a few kilometres away, or when your children are prevented from going to school for years, political representation seems an abstract goal. That is the reality in central Mali, as it is in many other places throughout the Sahel. For me, the interlinkage between security, human rights and development is evident. Without security, there can be no development. Without full respect for human rights, any security effort is doomed to fail, further alienating the population from the State.

The collective efforts of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to step up development efforts and move towards the full operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force are therefore truly commendable. They have our wholehearted support. Let me to highlight three areas that should guide our continued engagement with the G-5 Sahel Joint force.

First, the Joint Force is one of many instruments that make up an integrated, sustainable and regional approach to the situation in the Sahel. The primacy of politics should guide that work, and it is essential to ensure that an overarching political framework for the Sahel be put in place. We encourage strong engagement by the African Union, not least in ensuring coordination with other regional initiatives and frameworks and

in ensuring further integration within the African Union Peace and Security Architecture. This is an opportunity for the United Nations, the African Union and the subregion to work as one, together with other partners such as the European Union.

Secondly, the success of the Joint Force will depend upon the support of the population. That is particularly true where terrorist groups are entrenched within the population, exploiting the absence of State authority. A solid human rights compliance framework will therefore be of the utmost importance, not least to restore trust in State institutions and prevent fuelling further radicalization and destabilization. The G-5 Sahel countries recognized that need in the concept of operations for the Joint Force; we must now move towards the establishment of mechanisms to prevent and address international human rights law and international humanitarian law violations and abuses. It is essential that the activities of the Joint Force include a gender perspective in planning as well as in specific protection actions. The Joint Force might also encounter children associated with armed groups. Therefore, clear procedures on how to tackle the issue are needed, including through cooperation with child protection advisers.

Finally, peace is best pursued in partnership. We need to ensure that our repeated calls for regional ownership, expectations from the Force and our demands for accountability are matched with adequate resources and support. The suggested options for support put forward by the Secretary-General illustrate that many possibilities exist. Predictable and sustainable United Nations support is vital for the Force to be able to deliver on its objectives. Sweden stands ready to explore all models, including those that are most ambitious. A supportive role from the United Nations can underpin a stronger political framework, including through the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and mutual accountability.

The success of our efforts in the Sahel will be judged by how we improve the lives of the people who live there. The G-5 Sahel Joint Force is a welcome initiative to increase security, complement the activities of MINUSMA and end the terrorist threat. It deserves our full support. Accompanied by robust and meaningful development efforts to address the root causes of conflict and instability, it offers a chance to set the region on the path to sustainable peace.

**Mrs. Haley** (United States of America): I thank Secretary-General Guterres and the other briefers for being here today. I also thank France for its leadership on the issue and for organizing today's discussion.

Violent extremism in the Sahel is a growing problem, and responding to this violence is more dangerous than ever. We applaud the men and women of the armed forces of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We also salute the region's partners, particularly France with its long-standing counter-terror operation. And we thank the brave men and women serving in the world's most dangerous peacekeeping mission, in Mali. All those forces and missions have lost personnel. Civilians have also been the victims of violence across the region, including the tragic attack in Burkina Faso in August. Many families have lost loved ones — earlier this month, four members of our special forces and five members of the Niger army were killed on the Mali-Niger border while working together as partners to ensure peace in a threatened region.

But it is not just violent extremism that plagues the people of the Sahel; crime is also a growing problem. Historical trade routes across the region provide an opportunity for some of the worst actors in the continent. Criminals who traffic in drugs and human beings seek to profit from the chaos in the Sahel and are succeeding, to the detriment of human security in West Africa. During the Security Council's mission to the Sahel region last week, we witnessed the dedication to a brighter future by Government officials, officials from the Group of Five for the Sahel and members of civil society and of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. Those men and women are fighting an expanding threat that is mobile and resilient and has little respect for life. Their dedication is not only admirable, but worthy of the Council's continued attention and support.

The United States supports the initiative of the G-5 Sahel countries to develop a Joint force and deepen cooperation, which has the potential to improve security and complement the efforts of the peacekeeping mission in Mali. To that end, the United States will continue its long-standing bilateral support to the security forces of the members of the G-5 Sahel. We will also continue to work closely with our partners to help the G-5 Sahel Joint Force to be effective and well-coordinated with other counter-terror efforts in the region. The United States is committed to stabilizing the Sahel region. We

are proud to announce today that we plan to provide up to $60 million in bilateral assistance, which we will work with our Congress to identify, in order to help stand up the Joint Force.

We understand that the Force will need ongoing support, and we are eager for opportunities to work closely with our partners to make this effort a successful one. However, we believe that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force must be owned first and foremost by the countries of the region themselves. We expect that the G-5 Sahel countries will take on full regional ownership of the Force within a period of three to six years, with continued United States engagement. That is the approach that will be most effective in the end to free the region from terror.

We are inspired by the region's effort and intent, but we have reservations about encumbering a large peacekeeping mission with tasks it would not traditionally perform. The Mission in Mali has struggled to reach its full troop authorization. It continues to suffer from a lack of enabling equipment and it expends most of its resources protecting and resupplying itself. Moreover, the Mission is coming under increasing attack from violent extremists and shifting operations and locations. For those reasons, the Mission struggles to execute its strategic objective: to support the peace process in Mali. Its ability to focus on its core objective could be further compromised by a mandate to support a force with a broad concept of operations and recurring needs. We owe it to the troops, as well as to those who have lost their lives, to protect the Mission's vital resources from further overstretch and ensure that they are devoted to supporting a political solution in Mali.

I note that we also have serious and well-known reservations about using United Nations resources to support non-United Nations activities. We will each bring different strengths, insights and resources to bear on addressing insecurity in the Sahel. We look forward to discussions with our Security Council colleagues in the coming days on how best to bring the Force to life.

We know that security alone will not solve the complex and entrenched challenges in the Sahel, and we applaud the G-5 Sahel for encompassing aspects of resilience, governance and infrastructure in addition to security.

The mass closure of schools and the loss of safety and opportunity that comes from extremist violence threaten an entire generation. For many, the temptation to join the extremists is strong. We cannot abandon the people of Mali, the Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Chad to this fate. A long-term solution must be found as the G-5 Sahel Joint Force continues to evolve, and security gains must be consolidated by bringing good governance.

In Mali, interim authorities in the northern part of the country need to deliver services to show the local population that their presence will deliver concrete improvements for the Malian people. The United States will continue to work closely with regional stakeholders and partners to identify the needs of the Force and tailor our support as effectively as possible. We look forward to participating actively at the donor conference in Brussels, which will help the Force move closer to directly addressing and defeating this threat.

It is important to remember that the fate of the region is ultimately in the hands of the Governments in the Sahel. After several difficult months, the armed groups have reached a long-term ceasefire and expanded dialogue. These are positive signs, but serious differences between the Malian Government and the armed groups continue to challenge the peace process. The armed groups and the Malian Government must work together to implement the agreement.

As with all peacekeeping missions, we must see the Government working with MINUSMA towards achievable outcomes and a durable political solution. Real progress here would provide the surest path to greater security in the region.

In closing, let me reiterate our strong support for the undertaking of the G-5 countries. We welcome this regional ownership of security and stabilization in the Sahel. We will continue to stand with the people of the region as they take these important steps towards peace and security.

**Mr. Kyslytsya** (Ukraine): I would like to thank the French presidency for bringing once again to the attention of the Security Council the issue of peace and security in the Sahel region. Today's briefing is a good opportunity to discuss the steps that the international community can take to respond to the challenges facing the region, so I would thank you once again, Mr. President. Our appreciation goes also to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his report on the Joint Force of the Group of Five

for the Sahel (S/2017/869) and for his comprehensive presentation today.

Ukraine is extremely concerned by the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region. The crisis in Mali in 2012 created a State authority vacuum in the central and northern parts of the country that was subsequently filled by violent extremist groups associated with Al-Qaida, Da'esh and other terrorist entities. Weak governance, poverty and the influx of weapons and armed combatants created an environment conducive to the spread of radical extremism and terrorism to neighbouring countries, in particular those sharing common borders with Mali.

The terrorist attack in Ouagadougou in August, a spate of attacks against the the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in September and other recent militant strikes in the region show that the threat of terrorism continues to loom over most of the Sahel. This is a vivid example of how a regional spillover of violence is becoming a threat to global peace and security.

In this regard, Ukraine welcomed the decision of the States members of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5) to create a joint force tasked with combating violent extremism and terrorism within their borders. We could not agree more with the Secretary-General that the establishment of the Joint Force represents an opportunity that cannot be missed.

During a field mission to Mali, Burkina Faso and Mauritania earlier this month, organized in a timely manner by France and co-led by Italy and Ethiopia, the Security Council had a chance to garner insight into the realities of the situation on the ground and the state of operationalization of the Joint Force.

Given the limited resources of the participating countries, the progress made so far has been impressive. I refer in particular to the development of the concept of operations and steps to attain initial operational capability of Force headquarters in Sévaré and the command post in Niamey.

However, much more remains to be accomplished. It is important now that the G-5 Sahel member States maintain a strong commitment to their initiative and continue working towards the goal set with the support of bilateral partners, the Council and the wider international community.

As has already been noted in this Chamber, reaching full operational capability will require significant technical and financial resources. While recognizing the primary responsibility of the G-5 Sahel countries, we believe that it is crucial that international partners provide a helping hand to address the equipment and financial needs of the Joint Force. In this context, the donor conference scheduled for December in Brussels is an important initiative. We commend the Secretary-General for his readiness to get involved personally to mobilize the resources needed.

Ukraine also believes that, in its turn, the United Nations can play a role in supporting the Joint Force. The four options for support set out in the Secretary-General's report are worthy of in-depth consideration. It is our view that MINUSMA can provide valuable targeted assistance to the Force. It is clear that the Mission's mandate will have to be adjusted accordingly. However, any expansion of MINUSMA operations should not come at the expense of the Mission's ability to implement its primary mandate. Nor should we forget that there are still significant gaps in the Mission's capabilities that prevent it from fully reaching its potential.

This leads me to my last, and perhaps most important, point: the need to address the root causes of the crisis and instability in the Sahel. We are convinced that the Joint Force, once fully operationalized, will still constitute only one part of the required broader strategy. The full and unconditional implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is another crucial piece of the regional puzzle on how to restore peace and stability in Mali and the Sahel, as well as contain and eliminate any spillover effects of the internal struggle in the country.

The signatory parties should redouble their efforts to complete the operationalization of the interim administrations in the north and to engage in inclusive national consultations in the light of the upcoming constitutional review and referendum. The ultimate goal of these efforts should be the comprehensive reform of national institutions, which will help to bring real peace dividends to the people of Mali and to contribute to curbing instability in neighbouring countries.

In this regard, we believe that resolution 2374 (2017) remains an important tool for achieving change in the behaviour of the signatory parties and for encouraging them to be more proactive in advancing peace in Mali.

Let us be clear. If we want to achieve a sustainable peace and stability in the region, there must be greater investment in socioeconomic development. Without functioning Government structures, without the provision of essential social services, without working law enforcement or a judiciary, without active State support for local businesses and trade initiatives, vulnerable communities in conflict-affected and Government-neglected areas will remain an easy target for terrorists and extremists. Thus, initiatives on fighting terrorism; bringing about economic development; and ensuring respect for human rights, including the active promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, must go hand in hand and complement one another.

Lastly, I wish to echo the Secretary-General's call for the deployment of the Joint Force to be kept on the radar of the Security Council and for the Council to stand ready to take additional measures if necessary.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I call on the Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations of the United Kingdom.

**Baron Ahmad** (United Kingdom): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate. Your country deserves great credit for your leadership and your steadfast support for the countries of the Sahel. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Foreign Minister of Mali Abdoulaye Diop, Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat and European Union Special Representative for the Sahel Angel Losada Fernández. We welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/869) and today's briefing on the activities of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

During the recent Security Council visit, all Council members saw the serious challenges facing the countries of the Sahel. Those challenges represent a serious danger to the people of the region and to partners and allies who are working to support them.

I want to begin by offering my condolences to all those so tragically killed, including, most recently, three United Nations peacekeepers from Chad in Northern Mali on Thursday. In the past 12 months, we have witnessed a continuing stream of deadly terrorist attacks resulting in the tragic loss of innocent lives; an increase in attacks against forces of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); the ongoing corrosive influence of organized criminals trafficking weapons, drugs and people across the region; and the desperate journey of migrants, so often intercepted by people traffickers seeking to exploit them.

We all have a role to play in addressing those challenges. The United Kingdom have supported projects across the Sahel and the wider region, particularly in Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin. Last year alone, the British army trained 22,000 Nigerian troops in counter-terrorism tactics. We have invested over $6 million in tackling modern slavery, and $2.5 million in a joint border task force with the Nigerian army. We also provide training for Nigerian anti-trafficking officers. Across the Sahel, the United Kingdom spent over $225 million on humanitarian and development projects last year, and we are providing human rights training to Malian troops through the European Union Training Mission in Mali.

Our national crime agency recently dismantled two people-smuggling rings in Mali, and we stand ready to do more to support the G-5 Sahel countries and their allies to improve the security situation. The establishment of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is a step forward in countering terrorism and illegal migration. We were pleased that the Council offered its political support to the Mission earlier this year. For its part, the United Kingdom is currently undertaking a scoping mission to see what more it can do in the Sahel, including potential bilateral support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

Funding is an important factor in determining a mission's success, which is why we were pleased to support the European Union commitment to provide €15 million to the Joint Force. We welcome the work undertaken to establish the G-5 Joint Force. I was encouraged by reports from my Ambassador following his visit to the region.

We recognize the challenges faced by the Force and the value of tackling terrorists and traffickers with a holistic approach right across the region — in particular ensuring there is a clear plan to deliver services alongside security. If security gains are to take root, work must also continue to develop robust frameworks for compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law. We welcome the Secretary-General's support and his proposals for potential United Nations support. We are studying them in detail and considering the complementary roles that bilateral and multilateral

support can play in the Sahel region. We must ensure that MINUSMA is able to deliver its current mandate effectively and efficiently.

More than 140 brave MINUSMA peacekeepers have given their lives for the people of Mali. They and the G-5 Sashel forces operate in one of the most dangerous places in the world, and I pay tribute to them. I call upon the Government of Mali and other parties to the peace process to show the same courage, commitment and resolve to bring unity to the country. A successful peace process is at the heart of any strategy to defeat terrorism and traffickers in the Sahel. We in the Council expect a redoubling of efforts for peace and to see the political will to overcome the remaining obstacles.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom remains committed to peace and security across the Sahel. To that end, I reiterate our strong support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, which I sincerely believe can make an important contribution to achieving that goal.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): We appreciate the French presidency for organizing this ministerial-level meeting on the situation in the States of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We very much appreciate the presence among us of the French Minister and his presiding over the meeting. We also welcome the participation of other ministers at the meeting.

This meeting could not be more timely or relevant, coming as it does after the Security Council mission to the G-5 Sahel region. The visit has certainly helped the Council have a far more comprehensive understanding of the enormity of the challenges faced by the G-5 Sahel countries and reinforced the appreciation of the need to fully and speedily operationalize Joint Force, with the support of the international community. We welcome the report (S/2017/869) of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution to 2359 (2017) on the activities of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, including on its operationalization, on challenges encountered and on options concerning possible United Nations support for the Force. We wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report, for today's briefing and for his demonstrated efforts to try to address the challenges facing the Sahel region as a matter of priority. No doubt, his commitment in that regard is partly the result of the conviction that what happens in the G-5 Sahel region has broader and global implications.

I must stress that there is a full convergence of views on the matter with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. Of course, we are very pleased to have Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat with us via video-teleconference during this very important occasion and to listen to his views on the challenges faced by the G-5 Sahel countries, We appreciate his leadership and commitment to supporting the Sahel region within the framework of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture.

We are also very pleased to see Minister Abdoulaye Diop of Mali, the rotating Chair of the G-5 Sahel, who only a few days ago welcomed us in Bamako. We also wish to welcome his colleagues, the other ministers of the G-5 Sahel member States. I must acknowledge with thanks the hospitality we enjoyed it in Mauritania and Burkina Faso.

The G-5 Sahel countries have demonstrated their commitment to fighting terrorism and transnational organized crime by mobilizing their forces and allocating their limited resources. We take note of the efforts that they have made to fully operationalize their Joint Forces, but we recognize the enormous constraints they face in doing so. The challenges and threats to peace and security in the Sahel region are not only a matter of concern to the G-5 Sahel countries, but has broader implications for international peace and security. It is not very difficult to imagine the consequences if we fail to address the situation in the region by assisting the efforts of the G-5 Sahel countries, and we cannot agree more with what the Secretary-General said in that regard.

That is why we believe there is an urgent need to mobilize international support for the G-5 Sahel. In that regard, we note the commitments made by some bilateral and multilateral partners in financing the Joint Force. We appreciate the efforts by France and Germany to mobilize additional support by hosting planning meetings in support of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, and welcome the pledge made by European Union member States to provide various forms of technical and logistical support. However, what has so far been pledged falls far short of what is required to cover the preliminary budget required to sustain the Force for one year, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General. We look forward to the holding of the Brussels donor conference in December, in line with resolution 2359 (2017), which we hope will contribute to mobilizing additional support for the G-5 Sahel countries.

We commend the Secretary-General for his commitment to be personally involved in the resource mobilization endeavour, and welcome the various options that he has proposed for possible United Nations support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. It is indeed vital that the Council support this important regional initiative, which adds greater significance to the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime.

After having visited the countries in the region and witnessing firsthand the multiple and complex challenges they are facing, the importance and urgency of the matter cannot be overemphasized. We therefore hope the Council will seriously consider the options proposed by the Secretary-General, which were developed by drawing lessons from previous experiences, and make appropriate decisions soon.

The Security Council should be ambitious, as the Secretary-General said earlier. We fully agree with the Secretary-General on the complementarity of the Joint Force and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), with proposed options for support to the Joint Force also benefitting the work of MINUSMA. We also agree with him on the need to ensure cooperation and interoperability of the Joint Force with other operations and frameworks, including the African Union-led, Nouakchott process, Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA. Overall, the close coordination of the G-5 Sahel countries with other regional actors, the African Union and the United Nations, as well as the support of other bilateral and multilateral partners, is key to the success of the Force.

The multifaceted challenges facing the Sahel region, as stressed in the Secretary-General's report, can be effectively addressed only through a comprehensive strategy that0 encompasses security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian issues. Therefore, the rapid and effective implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, as called for in resolution 2359 (2017), is absolutely critical. We hope that countries of the region, in cooperation with bilateral and multilateral partners, will redouble their efforts in implementing the Strategy.

**Mr. Cardi** (Italy) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the French presidency for its briefing, which furthers a conversation that the Security Council has been holding on the Sahel in recent months, as well for the initiative of visiting the Sahel region. I would also like to thank the four briefers for their respective contributions to our debate.

I will turn first to the critical situation in which the Sahel currently finds itself. The security threats, which flow from terrorism and illegal trafficking and which coincide with a fragile political development context, jeopardize the peace and security of the entire Sahel region and the future of that region of the world. This is a concern shared by the entire international community, as attested to this morning by the speakers at this table. Italy shares those concerns, both as a member of the Security Council and the European Union and as a country that is focused on, and connected to, the Mediterranean, where the transregional dimension of instability in the Sahel reveals its tragic magnitude and pushes us to strengthen our relationship with the countries of the region.

The response of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), which aims to counter terrorism, trafficking in drugs and human beings through the establishment of a Joint Force, has the full political support of the Council and of the international community. The Council's visit to the region a few days ago confirmed the shared commitment of the G-5 Sahel countries to take ownership of their problems, the progress made in recent months in setting up the Joint Force, and what remains to be done for the full realization of this initiative.

Therefore, the question before us today is how we can support the Joint Force to enable it to fulfil its mandate. The Secretary-General provides us with four options in his report (S/2017/869), which the Security Council should address with the same courage and ambition that was evident in their development. We believe that the Security Council, in addition to any collegial choices that it may make, must be driven by its moral responsibility to provide, as soon as possible, predictable support to the Force, based on the fulfilment of certain conditions that the G-5 countries will be called upon to fulfil, such as ensuring respect for human rights.

Against that backdrop, we must work together to further increase the effectiveness of the concept of operations, the coherence between the military strategy and the development and stabilization strategy, the equipment and the financial viability of the Force in order to clearly identify the obligations of every actor

with a view to cooperation that develops along a defined and progressive path.

The added valued of multilateral support, which is the only way to ensure a coherent, coordinated and consistent framework for intervention, must also include the important potential of bilateral contributions, especially in view of the donors conference to be held in Brussels in December.

It is clear that the security response embodied in the G-5 Sahel initiative to create a credible peace and security architecture should be combined with development initiatives at national and regional levels. The Secretary-General recalls in his report his determination to revitalize the United Nations integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We would like to express our full support for such revitalization, which could lead to the strengthening of international coordination and integration of the various initiatives that are being carried out in the Sahel region.

The only credible way to ensure lasting peace and stability in the Sahel is by tackling the root causes of instability through measures that are capable of addressing the transregional challenges affecting the region. We support such an approach within the European Union. In that regard, I would like to mention the migration trust fund initiative, which combines addressing the deep-rooted causes of the migration phenomenon with a regional perspective.

The Sahel is not only a challenge for the United Nations, but also an opportunity. Over the coming months, we will be in a position to assess, first, the ability of peacekeeping to address new challenges; secondly, the success of the United Nations in developing coherent and coordinated regional strategies with other initiatives at the local level; and, thirdly, the capacity for integration and cooperation among the United Nations and the peace and security initiatives led by African countries. On the latter point, the international community, and in particular the United Nations, which bears responsibility for peacekeeping, must not shy away from investing both politically and financially in effective and long-term African ownership.

Italy is ready to play its part in these endeavours, as well as through its upcoming presidency of the Security Council in November, following France, during which time we are ready to continue our deliberations on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and on the Sahel as a region writ large. During our presidency, we intend to hold an open debate on security challenges in the Mediterranean, which is a subject that I have already alluded to and is deeply intertwined with what is happening in the Sahel.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are happy to see you, Mr. President, presiding over this meeting of the Security Council. We would like to thank Secretary-General Guterres; Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Diop; Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat; and European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, Mr. Losada Fernández, for their detailed briefings. We also welcome to the Chamber the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the Niger.

We are concerned about the situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region. In spite of the efforts that have been made, terrorism — and as we were informed by our interlocutors during the Security Council's recent visit to the region, I emphasize that I mean terrorism, not extremism — remains a very serious threat to security and stability in that part of the African continent. On top of that, there are also transnational issues that have destabilizing effects, such as drug trafficking, the illegal arms trade, the smuggling of various goods, separatist tendencies, acute internal conflicts and complex humanitarian and socioeconomic circumstances.

The situation in the Sahel is a reminder of the destructive nature of frankly reckless outside interference by force in the internal affairs of sovereign States. It is worth recalling, as we have often done, that the regime-change operation in Libya, which was done in violation of international law and the relevant decisions of the Security Council, has been a catalyst for instability in the region. We welcome the establishment by the countries of the region of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to combat the terrorist threat, which was unanimously endorsed in resolution 2359 (2017). We believe that the Joint Force is an appropriate response to regional issues along the lines of the principle of African solutions to African problems, which in our view is the only way to achieve sustainable peace in Africa. The Joint Force will help to address a whole range of tasks, not only counter-terrorism efforts but also the work of eliminating the transborder criminal groups that are the terrorists' allies.

We support the Joint Force's operational deployment on the ground and its participants' determination

to achieve that as soon as possible, and urge them to strengthen their collaboration on that. However, going on the conclusions of the Security Council mission to the Sahelo-Saharan region, it appears that the countries of the G-5 Sahel are deploying their contingents at varying speeds and that some are falling behind. In that regard, I would like to underscore that only a genuine joint and coordinated effort on the part of all members of the G-5 Sahel can have effective results. The members of the G-5 Sahel need and deserve support in responding to the challenges they face. We believe it is vital that the international community give them support.

We should carefully consider the options that the Secretary-General proposes in his report on resolution 2359 (2017) (S/2017/869) with regard to United Nations involvement in such efforts. However, we believe it will also be important to consider gradually expanding United Nations cooperation, based on the fourth option, especially since the mandates of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the countries of the G-5 Sahel coincide where providing support to the Government of Mali and restoring its authority throughout the country are concerned. But there are a lot of problems that will have to be solved in that regard, so it would not be a good idea to get ahead of ourselves until the tasks mandated by the Security Council are fulfilled.

It is still quite clear that, in order to achieve long-term security, development and stability in the region, besides enhancing counter-terrorism measures, State institutions will have to be strengthened to ensure systemic economic and social development and universal respect for human rights and the rule of law. In that regard, we enthusiastically commend the programmes for developing remote regions that have been adopted by the Governments of Burkina Faso and Mauritania.

We believe that the foundation for making progress in the areas we have mentioned is the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which has not yet been exploited to its full potential. It will be essential to get more out of the Strategy's existing mechanisms and to involve the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region and of Africa as a whole in it as much as possible, with an emphasis on relevant steps to be taken by the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the G-5 Sahel itself. The views of regional partners should be a top priority in that process.

In conclusion, we would like to point out that in an age of globalization, terrorism, too, has become global. We can eradicate its threat only by uniting in the broadest possible front, which Russia has been calling for for a long time. Furthermore, my country has begun providing support to the security forces of a number of countries of the Sahel and will continue to do so. After all, the effectiveness of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel will ultimately depend on improving the potential of its national armed forces.

**Mr. Seck** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding in person over today's briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2017/869), only a few days after the Security Council's mission to the region.

We also welcome the presence and participation of the delegation of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), led by Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, accompanied by his colleagues from Chad, the Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso.

The fact that the issue of peace and security in Africa is on the agenda of the French presidency of the Security Council in October is another illustration of the special importance that France attaches to stability on the African continent. France's ongoing commitment to supporting African countries in their efforts to combat terrorism and promote development is commendable and deserves our thanks. I would also like to welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Secretary-General, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Commission, and Mr. Angel Losada Fernández, European Union Special Representative for the Sahel.

I will spare the Council the details of the volatile situation in the region, since the briefers I just mentioned have already provided them in plenty. I would simply like to add that what the members of the Security Council saw, heard and reported following our mission to the Sahel, along with the briefings we have heard today, has confirmed our belief that only a comprehensive response, backed by united, well-coordinated efforts can put an end to the multifaceted threats that continue to undermine the very foundations of security and stability in the entire West African region of the Sahel and its member States.

Senegal therefore emphasizes that, given the transborder and transregional nature of this threat, only by strengthening regional cooperation and streamlining our efforts can we address the challenge. Indeed, the G-5 Sahel countries have committed to that goal by establishing a Joint Force to better combat the terrorist and other criminal armed groups in the Sahel region. We welcome that initiative, as it fits squarely into the broader scheme that is gradually being implemented throughout the Sahelo-Saharan region to halt the propagation and spread of terrorism and stamp out a scourge that undermines every effort to build sustainable development and peaceful societies. We should also consider the G-5 Sahel Joint Force's complementarity with the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad basin, of which both the Niger and Chad are members, as well as France's Operation Barkhane and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as they all work together to combat the negative effects of the conflict in Libya and the proliferation of foreign terrorist fighters in the region, not to mention the various types of trafficking — in arms, drugs and cultural assets — and the smuggling of migrants.

All of these reasons should encourage resolute international support for the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, and all the more so because it has not been conceived as a miracle cure for all the problems threatening the region but as playing a decisive additional part in the international and regional efforts already under way. As the Secretary-General makes clear in his report, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force's efforts will complement those of MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and Member States' national forces, as well as other initiatives in the region.

As part of the effort to strengthen Africa's Peace and Security Architecture, the African Union, which has already given its blessing to the Joint Force, should continue to play a central role in coordinating and aligning the various subregional, regional, and even international, efforts and initiatives. Ensuring multidimensional support on the part of the international community is exactly in tune with resolution 2378 (2017), which the Security Council adopted this year. While the G-5 Sahel countries are chiefly responsible for financing and equipping the Joint Force, it is a fact that political, financial and operational support from the United Nations and bilateral and multilateral partners will be essential to enable it to reach full operating capability between now and March 2018, as established in its concept of operations.

For all of those reasons, Senegal supports the G-5 Sahel initiative, as President Macky Sall explained in this Chamber on 20 September (see S/PV.8051) at the Security Council meeting on peacekeeping operations in Africa during Egypt's presidency, as well as more recently in Dakar during the State visit by President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré of Burkina Faso. That is because of the common destiny that links Senegal and the G-5 Sahel countries, with which we share the same space, the same aspirations and the same fight, as well as extensive borders.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to sincerely thank the Secretary-General for his valuable briefing, his comprehensive and excellent report (S/2017/869) and the various and ambitious options he has put forward. I would also like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali in his capacity as Chair of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel for their informative briefings. And I thank France, presiding over the Security Council for the month of October, for convening today's meeting and organizing the Council's recent visit to a number of countries of the Sahel, which has helped to shed light on the challenges they are facing and the assistance they need from the international community at this critical juncture.

The Sahel is dealing with a number of security and development challenges with regional and international repercussions. The inadequate border controls of the countries of the region have enabled illegal trafficking to flourish, including trafficking in drugs and persons, and the area has become a safe haven for terrorist groups. In the absence of State development initiatives, disputes over resources have led to a further deterioration of the security situation. A number of extremist groups have begun to organize, propagating their extremist ideologies and imposing them on citizens, and as a result many young people have resorted to fleeing as migrants or refugees.

The Security Council has a legal and moral obligation to provide support and assistance to the countries of the Sahel in order to restore stability and security. Many of the challenges they are dealing with are new, the direct result of the changing regional

environment, especially in Libya. The crisis in the Sahel and its reverberations will not remain confined to the region, or even to the African continent, but are an immediate and clear threat to international peace and security. The initiative of the countries of the G-5 Sahel to create the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel is the best possible way of dealing with regional security challenges, being in the long term the most sustainable and least costly option financially, militarily and in terms of human resources. In that regard, I would like to stress that regional ownership does not obviate the importance of providing financial and logistical support, whether through the United Nations or bilaterally. A security-focused approach alone will not guarantee sustainable peace in the Sahel. That is why the G-5 Sahel countries need development support, as a first step towards a balanced partnership among the States of the region based on mutual respect, transparency and open dialogue, which would enable us to listen to the concerns of the countries involved and understand their needs, with a view to improving their technical capacity, supporting sustainable development and promoting good governance and the rule of law.

During the Council's recent visit to the Sahel, we acknowledged the importance of addressing the root causes of the crisis, whether social, economic, development or climate-related, by demonstrating the political will needed to implement — as quickly and urgently as possible — the programmes and activities of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, adopted by the Council in 2013. The Integrated Strategy is a comprehensive framework for preventing further crises in the region, as well as contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, through that, to durable and lasting peace. In that regard, Egypt looks forward to the results of the Secretariat's mapping exercise on the support to be provided for implementing the Strategy in the near future.

In conclusion, Egypt will spare no effort in supporting our brothers in the G-5 Sahel, whether through our contribution to dialogue in the Council on the situation in Mali and the Sahel, or through our bilateral and regional cooperation programmes, which we always develop in consultation with the G-5 Sahel countries.

**Mr. Ali** (Kazakhstan): We thank Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, for this opportunity to discuss the ways in which the international community can support the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We thank Secretary-General António Guterres; Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission; Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali; and Mr. Angel Losada Fernández, European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, for their insightful briefings.

I would first like to express our deepest condolences to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Governments of Mali, the Niger, Chad and the United States on the tragic deaths of their troops in the recent terrorist attacks in Mali and the Niger. We salute the bravery of the personnel of MINUSMA for their selfless service in the cause of peace in one of the most dangerous places in the world.

The security situation in the Sahel continues to deteriorate as a result of the threats posed by Ansar Eddine, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, and other terrorist and violent extremist groups. The insecurity is aggravated by their alliances with groups involved in transnational organized crime, drug and human trafficking and arms proliferation from neighbouring Libya. We firmly believe that deploying the G-5 Sahel Joint Force will help to reinforce the efforts of MINUSMA, the Malian national security forces and other operations in the region, such as France's Operation Barkhane, to bring peace and stability to the Sahel.

During the Council's recent field mission there, we were pleased to see how determined the leadership of the G-5 Sahel is to overcome these challenges to their security. We therefore welcome the official opening on 9 September of the Joint Force's headquarters in Sévaré and look forward to its full operationalization by March 2018. Its effectiveness will depend on predictable and steady funding, as well as the political support of other regional actors. We therefore commend the financial support that the European Union and France have provided and hope that others will also make major pledges at the donor conference in Brussels in December so as to bridge the funding gap, which currently stands at more than €300 million.

We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendations in his report (S/2017/869) regarding four possible options for supporting the Force, and

echo his appeal to the Security Council that any action taken should be ambitious. We should also ensure the complementarity and improve the coordination of the Joint Force's operations with all security forces in the region, including MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane, the Multinational Joint Task Force for the Lake Chad basin and regional frameworks, particularly the African Union-led Nouakchott proces, designed to enhance security cooperation and operationalize the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

However, we realize that a military approach alone will not address the instability in the region, which is the result of an accumulation of problems of which violent extremism is only the most recent layer. It will be vital to focus on the root causes of the conflict and instability by strengthening local governance, reducing poverty and tribal rivalries, providing basic services, creating more jobs and mitigating the effects of climate change. We therefore need a comprehensive subregional approach aimed at building resilience in the region's human and environmental systems and increasing peace and prosperity. In that regard, the effective implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, with increased investments in sustainable development, climate mitigation and development, can help us to achieve the goals I have discussed. Concerted efforts to promote a strong disarmament, demobilization and reintegration policy, address impunity and corruption, advance structural reforms in security, justice and the rule of law and foster human rights are also vital. Peace will also be more durable when women and young people are fully integrated into all activities at every stage of the peace process and are at the negotiating table at the highest levels.

In addition, initiatives such as the G-5 Sahel countries' regional development strategy, the Alliance for the Sahel — a joint initiative of France, Germany and the European Union — and others will help to enhance the Strategy's mandate. Successful results at the international investment forum in Mali scheduled for 7 December will help to boost the region's social and economic emergence and development. However, none of that will happen without concrete progress in the Malian peace process. We hope that the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force will improve the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, including the operationalization of the interim authorities in northern Mali. However, that can succeed only if all stakeholders work together and stick to a clearly formulated vision and process, as well as realistic timelines.

My delegation therefore supported the Council's adoption of resolution 2374 (2017), which establishes a sanctions regime on Mali, since we believe it will send a strong message to the parties to change their approach and implement the Agreement. In conclusion, Kazakhstan remains committed to helping the countries of the Sahel fulfil their vision for peace, progress and prosperity.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes Mr. Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, as he presides over today's meeting in New York, as well as Foreign Minister Diop. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the European Union Special Representative for their briefings.

The Sahel region is currently facing multiple challenges, including a fragile security situation, spreading terrorism and an increasingly serious incidence of transnational organized crime, all of which will require a greater contribution and comprehensive policies and strategies on the part of the international community. That is the background on which the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) has been established to bring a combined response to bear on the G-5 Sahel's regional security challenges. China commends that initiative and would like to make the following comments.

First, the Joint Force should receive effective assistance and support from the international community. It represents an important embodiment of African countries' self-empowerment, solidarity, cooperation and coordination and should make a significant contribution to peace and stability in Africa, and in the world generally. The Security Council welcomed the Joint Force in its unanimous adoption of resolution 2359 (2017). The international community should fully respect Africa's ownership of its issues and enable it to play a leading role in solving them. It should support the efforts of the countries of the region and regional organizations to maintain peace and stability in the Sahel and provide assistance to the Joint Force, especially financially.

Secondly, greater efforts must be made to push for a political solution to the hotspot issues in the

region. The international community should respect the sovereignty of the countries concerned and give them active support, advance the peace process and promote national reconciliation so as to defuse tensions on the major issues and lead to their final settlement. We should support the accelerated implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, give particular attention to external issues such as the Libyan crisis that can have a spillover effect and reduce the negative impact of external factors on the Sahel region.

Thirdly, we must step up our contributions to counter-terrorism cooperation in the Sahel. The relevant counter-terrorism agencies of the United Nations should work to improve cooperation in this area among the countries of the region, while the international community should help them to build their security capacity and support their counter-terrorism efforts. Terrorism is the common enemy of humankind, and it is vital to fight it whenever, wherever and in whatever forms it appears. All States should adhere to the same norms and work to fight all groups that the Security Council designates as terrorist. In our international counter-terrorism cooperative efforts and operations we must ensure that the Council in particular, and the United Nations in general, play a leading role, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the internationally recognized norms governing international relations, with a view to strengthening effective coordination.

We should recognize the importance of regional cooperation and ensure that regional and subregional organizations play their due part. China acknowledges the positive roles that the Group of Five for the Sahel, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States are playing in the efforts to resolve the issues in the Sahel. The international community should strengthen its coordination and communication with countries in the region, as well as the relevant regional and subregional organizations, in order to closely align country-specific and regional strategies, as well as the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, thereby enabling all actors to play to their respective strengths and form synergies.

As a permanent member of the Security Council and a developing country itself, China has always supported African countries in solving African issues in their own ways. We support the specific roles of regional organizations in addressing African matters. China is of the view that supporting Africa's efforts to achieve peace, stability and development is in the common interests of all of us, all over the world. It is also the common responsibility of the international community. China supports the efforts made by African regional and subregional organizations, including the G-5 Sahel. We have already approved a China-United Nations peace and development fund aimed at supporting counter-terrorism cooperation projects for the Sahel. China will continue to work with its international partners to step up its contribution to peace and sustainable development in the Sahel and the whole of Africa.

**Mr. Bessho** (Japan): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's important meeting. I also thank today's briefers for their insightful and powerful statements, as well as the leaders of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) for their initiative and commitment. I especially appreciate the presence here today of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, and his participation in today's discussion.

Japan thanks the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/869), issued in accordance with resolution 2359 (2017). We look forward to participating actively in discussions on possible United Nations support to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, recommendations for which were presented in the report. Today I would like to point out that such discussions should take into account all aspects of the situation, including broader societal transformations, which the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is meant to support.

Lasting security in the Sahel is ultimately a function of political, social and economic development. That was clear during the Council's recent mission to the Sahel, which focused on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, the political foundation for our current and future work on Mali and the other G-5 Sahel States. That is in line with the emphasis of resolution 2359 (2017) on pursuing counter-terrorism efforts in the region with a view to supporting the Peace Agreement. Indeed, throughout the year, we have reaffirmed that the nexus between peace and security and humanitarian concerns and development requires an integrated and preventive response.

The Sahel is facing a growing threat. Japan commends the efforts by the G-5 Sahel States and

France to counter terrorism. We also believe that preventive efforts will be needed to mitigate the threat in the future. As the Council observed during its mission, security-focused and short-term measures alone will not bring about lasting stability. We need a sharper focus on addressing the root causes of the conflicts that bedevil Sahel countries in both cross-border and local contexts. By that I mean chronic underdevelopment, inadequate local governance and State institutions and a lack of education and job opportunities, particularly for young people, all of which open the door to exploitation by terrorist groups and organized crime. The Secretary-General's report, the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the African Union Strategy for the Sahel Region, and the Peacebuilding Commission all identify the same problems. In essence, human security is at stake.

Addressing these root causes in a comprehensive manner is at the core of conflict prevention and sustaining peace. That is not easy and it takes time, but there are no shortcuts to this approach. As the Secretary-General has noted, the Joint Force must be paired with deeper reflection on development and institutions. With those principles in mind, Japan has provided approximately $1.3 billion in development and humanitarian assistance to the Sahel since 2013, both bilaterally and multilaterally, within the framework of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. Those efforts promote development and security institutions, thereby weakening the influence of terrorist and criminal groups. They include activities as diverse as supporting laws on migrant smuggling in the Niger and terrorist financing in Burkina Faso, developing human rights-compliant criminal justice responses to terrorism in Chad and enhancing border controls in Mauritania and Mali.

We would particularly like to highlight the International Ministerial Conference on Border Management and Border Communities in the Sahel, convened in March 2016 under the auspices of the G-5 Sahel States with the support of United Nations Development Programme and Japan. The Conference resulted in the Bamako declaration, in which the G-5 Sahel States called for development-focused efforts in border communities, with particular emphasis on young people and conflict prevention. The G-5 Sahel States will continue to need international and United Nations support in order to implement those development priorities and enhance social cohesion and community security, particularly in border communities. In the short term, the Joint Force will focus on combating terrorism and organized crime, and we appreciate its important work. At the same time, its operations must ultimately contribute to long-term solutions in the Sahel.

**Mr. Rosselli** (Uruguay) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, for your initiative and your presence here today to preside over our meeting.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I would also like to thank Secretary-General Guterres; Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, in his capacity as Chair of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel); Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission; and Mr. Angel Losada Fernández, European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, for their briefings.

Uruguay has been very involved in the complex problems on the African agenda and once again underscores the commendable initiative of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel to form a multinational Joint Force to fight terrorism, in a clear example of taking national ownership in the face of the multiple challenges confronting the region. The terrorist threat in the Sahel region knows no political borders, and we should not lose sight of the fact that the challenges that those countries are facing are factors that affect stability at both the regional and the international levels.

My delegation has repeatedly expressed the view that it fully shares the observations contained in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peacekeeping Operations (S/2015/446) on United Nations peacekeeping operations, in particular that they should not be mandated to conduct counter-terrorism activities. With that in mind, we believe that the multinational initiatives, such as the multinational Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), represent important tools for addressing those issues. With the deployment of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, it will be possible to give the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) greater room to manoeuvre in the full implementation of its mandate, which has been an impossible task to date owing to the multiple operational challenges that the Mission faces. With

adequate coordination at the level of their command structures, the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel and MINUSMA will be able to complement each other and improve their effectiveness.

With regard to MINUSMA's mandate, I would like once again to express a more general opinion. I believe that it is essential that deployed peacekeepers be adequately equipped, trained and prepared to carry out all the tasks set forth in their mission's mandate. Bearing that in mind, the national restrictions — the so-called caveats — whether they are declared or, even worse, not declared, such as the absence of effective command and control, the refusal to obey orders, failure to respond to attacks against civilians, or inadequate equipment, cannot be tolerated, since they negatively affect shared responsibility for effective fulfilment of mandates.

With regard to the deployment of the Joint Force, we believe that it is necessary for the international community to lend its support and stand shoulder to shoulder with the G-5 Sahel countries in their initiative to support such regional efforts. It would be dishonest to say that such challenges should be borne only by the countries of the Sahel region, which is why the support of the international community is, we believe, essential and self-evident. Accordingly, we commend the generous contributions made by international partners to date. At the same time, we underscore that it is important to continue providing support to the Joint Force until it reaches its full and sustained operational level.

Uruguay fully shares the Secretary-General's view that the Security Council should provide ambitious support to the Joint Force through the support module recommended by the Security Council. We believe that the international community must undertake a strong commitment to that end so that positive and lasting results can be achieved as quickly as possible.

Regardless of the way in which the United Nations provides support for the ramping-up of the Joint Force, Uruguay believes that it will be essential to have a monitoring, supervision and accountability mechanism to deal with compliance with international human rights standards and humanitarian law. All security activities, including those in the fight against terrorism, will have to be carried out in strict adherence with standards of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Similarly, appropriate guarantees of due process will have to be provided to the victims of such violations.

I would also like to draw attention to the multiplicity of factors that aggravate the crisis in the Sahel region, which are not limited solely to the terrorist threat or the absence of State control over the full territory of the countries in question. As the members of the Council were able to see during their recent mission to Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso, as well as during their visit last March to the Niger and Chad, the difficulties encountered encompass a very broad range of challenges that are intrinsically related to the development of the region. Terrorism and trafficking networks operating in the region are paralysing Governments and societies and are delaying the development of these five countries.

Our assessment would appear simplistic if we focused on security as the main and sole priority in the Sahel region. Taking initiatives to improve security is important in order to pave the way for us to implement policies on development, the promotion of the rule of law, institution- and capacity-building, and strengthening the resilience of the various communities in the Sahel region. Such combined efforts will be precisely those that lead to the sustainable peace that will enable the G-5 Sahel countries to focus on their political stability and their economic and social progress.

**Mr. Llorentty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Bolivia would like to express its deepest condolences to the members of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), who have lost three of their own in recent days. We also extend our condolences to the people and the Government of Chad.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/869) and His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of Mali, for his statement on behalf of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

I would also like to thank Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and Mr. Ángel Losada Fernández, the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel. Bolivia also welcomes the presence in this Chamber today of the Foreign Ministers of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the Niger. We wish to express our gratitude to the

presidency of France for organizing not only today's meeting, but also the trip to the region that allowed the members of the Council to have a much more direct and profound view of problems that affect the region.

Bolivia welcomes and commends the efforts of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger in the deployment and operationalization of their forces on the ground. The deteriorating political, socioeconomic and security situation in the region, in addition to jeopardizing the integrity and lives of the people in the area, has curtailed and obstructed the development of the region. We are sure that the strategic concept of the operation and the deployment of their forces with the purpose of countering the impact of terrorism and transnational organized crime through multidimensional operations in border areas provide an appropriate complement to the work being done by MINUSMA in Mali. The challenges facing the G-5 Sahel are critical, and the response must, of course, not be delayed.

We would also like to highlight the efforts of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel as it seeks to implement the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, which goes hand in hand with the Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region. The G-5 Sahel is the clearest example of the contribution that African countries are making to strengthen their security capacity in the region.

As an example of the situation in the countries of the Sahel, let me refer to Mali, which, following a peaceful transfer of power in 2002, enjoyed a period of political stability and economic growth. Today, however, it is suffering in a complex and volatile environment, facing asymmetric threats that are not only putting the political peace process at risk, but are also threatening the civilian population and the members of the United Nations peacekeeping mission. Not only must they grapple with the impact of the violence from armed groups, but they must also fight the threat of terrorist groups and the transnational underworld and organized crime, which are operating illicit networks trafficking in persons, including migrants, drug and arms, inter alia.

As a number of my colleagues have said, it is therefore important to analyse the structural causes of the conflict, which have brought about the volatile security situation in the region. We have witnessed with great concern the consequences of interventionism and regime-change politics pursued in the aftermath of the 2011 conflict in Libya. One of the side effects of the foreign interference was the destabilization of the Sahel, which brought chaos, terrorism and trafficking in weapons and generated a vicious circle of violence. Likewise, we cannot ignore, among the underlying structural causes, the exploitation of natural resources, which is intrinsically tied to international peace and security. Countries of the subregion, such as Mauritania, Mali and the Niger, are depositories of substantial mineral wealth, while others like Chad are rich in hydrocarbon resources.

It is clear that the security situation in the Sahel presents great challenges both for national Governments and for the international community. According to statistics from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, of the almost 150 million of inhabitants in the region, approximately 30 million people face food insecurity; 12 million live at the crisis and emergency levels; and six million children under the age of 5 and pregnant and nursing women suffer from malnutrition and are in need of urgent assistance. That does not include the 4.9 million people who have undergone the ordeal of internal displacement.

Moreover, the effects of drought and climate change affect the Sahel every year. The lack of basic services is having a negative impact on health, thereby increasing the risk of the spread of diseases and the need for their treatment. Bolivia believes that it is necessary to mobilize a humanitarian response in order to curb the population's vulnerability.

Within the framework of the United Nations four support options for the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, it is necessary not only to take into account the recommendations of the African Union, but also to ensure sustainable and predictable economic support for the Force. In that regard, as the five representatives of those countries have pointed out, every effort and all cooperation must be channelled through multilateral institutions like the United Nations.

In conclusion, we call on and encourage the international community to continue to contribute with technical support to and economic and humanitarian cooperation with all initiatives aimed at helping the people of the Sahel in the interest of achieving stability and permanent peace in the region. It is not only a

question of every country feeling duty-bound out of a sense of solidarity and self-interest with regard to the situation in the Sahel, but, above all, countries that are partly responsible for the extremely volatile situation in the region must also shoulder their responsibility.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Burkinabé Abroad of Burkina Faso.

**Mr. Barry** (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Following the appeal and statement by my brother Abdoulaye Diop, who just described the ongoing situation in our region to the Security Council, I would like, in my national capacity, to tell members that, at this very moment, in one of the provinces of Burkina Faso on the border with Mali, more than 2,000 school children are unable to go to school They were not able to return to school in early October, unlike children in other regions, because of the terrorist attacks and threats of attacks on their schools and villages. Some of them have fled their villages with their parents to seek refuge elsewhere. Others have stayed, but they no longer have teachers, because the latter have also abandoned their jobs. Like other Government employees, those teachers live in a state of paranoia caused by the fear of seeing terrorists arrive, as occurred last March in one such village, where one of their colleagues was gunned down in front of schoolchildren during recess. Unfortunately, yet another was killed a few days ago by unidentified assailants.

The threats are real. Schools, prefectures and town halls are being set on fire. Mayors and municipal officials are being kidnapped and killed. The entire administration in the strip bordering our neighbour, the brotherly country of Mali, has been affected. Symbols of the State are under attack by people whose aim is to wipe out the public administration and take control of the area, which would give those terrorist groups free reign to traffick as they please in whatever can pay for their activities, including weapons, drugs, cigarettes, human beings or even cattle. Accordingly, they attack everything, including military camps, convoys of all kinds, and gendarme, police and customs installations. They have also carried out kidnappings and placed anti-personnel mines.

Over the past 18 months, Burkina Faso has suffered more than 80 terrorist attacks, including two attacks in the capital of Ouagadougou, namely, an attack on the Cappuccino restaurant in January 2016 and another on the Aziz Istanbul café in August. I would like to take this opportunity once again to thank the members of the Security Council who gathered at the scene of the attack of 13 August and showed their support for the staff of the Cappuccino restaurant. In total, those attacks led to the deaths of 133 people, many of whom were foreigners who were fellow citizens of member countries of the Council, thereby confirming that the security challenge facing us is a shared and international one.

Eradicating the terrorist threat in Burkina and in every one of our countries also means safeguarding other countries, including the countries of members of the Council, and protecting our citizens and theirs. During their mission, Council members were able to see for themselves on the ground the determination of our Governments and the increased capacities of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5). It is not yellow, orange or red alerts that will effectively protect their or our fellow citizens against such barbarians, but rather true cooperation among us and real support from the Security Council for our actions, such as those provided within the framework of the G-5 Sahel. Protecting Burkina Faso is synonymous with protecting the other countries of West Africa — those in the north and those in the south of the region, including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin, to name only those sharing a border with Burkina.

Terrorist groups seeking territories to control must not be allowed to gain the least bit of ground on any of our borders or in any of our territories, because the countries that I mentioned that are further south are on average situated 500 kilometres away and consequently not that far from the northern front. The threat is therefore hardly remote for every one of those countries, and for every one of the countries represented here.

Investigators have found evidence linking the attacks on Grand-Bassam in Côte d'Ivoire and those on Ouagadougou with terrorist groups based in Burkina, Mali and in the Niger, as those attacking our borders flee towards Mali and the Niger — or conversely they attack in Mali and flee towards Burkina. All of us must accept that the Malian crisis is spilling over that country's borders. Burkina therefore firmly calls for a regional solution to the crisis. That is the raison d'être of G-5 Sahel in its current phase with regard to the burgeoning deployment of the Joint Force.

As my brother Abdoulaye Diop recalled earlier, the Force positively complements the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. While the United Nations Force takes care of the interior of Mali, the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel can assume responsibility for the border regions and neighbouring countries. We accordingly welcome the report of Secretary-General António Guterres (S/2017/869), in particular the options proposed to support the G-5 Sahel. That report is a great step forward for the G-5 Sahel because it considers the regional dimension of the Malian crisis and the security challenges of the area.

For its part, Burkina is not only participating to the best of its ability with the means at its disposal, but is also acting in cooperation with some of the States represented here — and I take this opportunity to thank them — to protect our borders and our territory. Our defence and security forces are engaged in a fierce combat with the few means at their disposal. They are operating while respecting human rights, the rights of the people and the rights of the 32,000 Malians who have sought refuge on our soil.

In the same vein, the Government has launched an emergency programme for the Sahel involving the region bordering Mali and the Niger, because combating terrorism must be accompanied by development activities in the region. With a total of $750 million for four years, including $135 million for 2017, that programme is aimed at improving the living conditions of the people of the area and at redressing inequalities with regard to the rest of the country's population. The emergency programme, which is currently funded from our own resources, covers basic social services, infrastructure, and income-generating production and processing activities for the people, almost exclusively farmers and breeders. The goal of the Government is to ensure that those people do not feel abandoned by the State, that they do not resort to trafficking, and that they do not become easy prey for the terrorists, who dream of enlisting all the young people of the region. To that end we must act quickly so as not to fall straight into a vicious cycle that could be summed up in one sentence: without security, there is no development; without development, there is no security.

We call for the mobilization and support of the Council in the form of multilateral support, bilateral support or both during the G-5 Sahel donor conference scheduled for 14 December in Brussels. More than ever, Burkina Faso is counting on the Council. More than ever, the G-5 Sahel is counting on the Council. As I have said, we must act quickly. Since the Council's visit last week there has been another attack. There has been another death. That is why I will repeat once more: we must act quickly.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of Chad.

**Mr. Taha** (Chad) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, I would like, on behalf of the Government of Chad, to convey my gratitude to the various speakers for their expressions of sympathy and solidarity following the deaths of the three soldiers of the Chadian contingent of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The deaths of young Chadian soldiers in northern Mali add to the heavy price already paid by my country for the cause of peace in that part of Africa, which is in the grip of insecurity and violence.

Allow me to congratulate the French presidency of the Security Council for their leadership and the crucial role that they have been playing in developing a correct understanding of our shared will to fight terrorism and cross-border organized crime in the Sahel region. The recent visit of the Council to our subregion was quite reassuring, for it was a powerful expression of the Council's clear interest in the Sahel and the people living there, who are confronted with the combined effects of terrorism and violent extremism, trafficking of all kinds and the ongoing degradation of their environment owing to climate change. The Council's poignant testimonies echo the concerns that we have constantly raised concerning the reality of the threats prevailing in the Sahel and the need to eradicate them swiftly.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/869) refers to the numerous challenges, both natural and manmade, facing the peoples of the Sahel. It also recognizes the determination of our Governments to improve the living conditions of our people through the implementation of development projects in a secure environment. The report strongly emphasizes the necessity for international community support for the effort, which is being led by the States of the Sahel.

I would also like to take this opportunity to convey to the Secretary-General the cordial greetings of President Idriss Déby Itno, as well as his congratulations

to the Secretary-General for the innovative spirit that he has brought to our Organization with a view to realizing its major objectives. I address to him these words of gratitude from my country and our people for his commitment to the Sahel. The unequivocal terms that he used in depicting the situation in the region indicate an informed understanding of the threats and the responsibilities that we must bear to overcome those threats. May I also praise the very important role of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, who has spared no effort in bringing this project to its current stage.

In setting up the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel wanted to show their determination to fight terrorism, organized crime and trafficking in drugs and human beings in the region, while taking into account the need to respect human rights, the gender issue and child welfare. Resolution 2359 (2017) of 21 June and the adoption of the strategic concept of operations marked a turning point in the establishment of the Joint Force. However, it is clear that much remains to be done, because some key issues that are part of what is intended to be a robust mandate still need to be addressed, and we need resources to render the Force fully operational.

International peace and security are indivisible, and terrorist activities are now crossing the borders of the Sahel. The recent attacks in Burkina Faso, the Niger, Mali, including those against MINUSMA, are a perfect illustration of the danger posed by the terrorists' actions, which also reveal a paradigm shift in their modus operandi. In addition, violent extremists and others who preach jihad, particularly those close to Da'esh, exploit the volatility of the situation in Libya to re-establish themselves there and continue their criminal activities. The freedom of movement inherent in the very geography of the Sahel allows them to engage in transnational crime and the trafficking of drugs, weapons and human beings.

To combat those threats and ensure the security of the peoples of the Sahel, the G-5 States, in the exercise of their sovereign responsibilities, have undertaken considerable efforts. But the threats are of such magnitude that our limited logistical, material and financial capacities cannot stop them. The situation therefore calls for the immediate commitment on the part of the international community in order to give the Force real intervention capabilities. Any hesitation will only benefit criminal groups and weaken both the resilience of the people and the reaction of our States, which, it should be emphasized, fully understand the situation prevailing in the Sahel.

Against that backdrop, we welcome the options presented by the Secretary-General in his report, and we believe that the implementation of the first phase of the strategic concept of operations, in particular the ramping-up of troop levels within the three strategic corridors, responds objectively to current security concerns. The international community is also affected by this threat and must respond by providing substantial support to G-5 Sahel States, which are pooling their operational capabilities in order to fight this scourge through the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel.

The Security Council, which has dispatched working missions to the States members of the G-5 Sahel and which has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, is sufficiently informed about what is at stake. We await, therefore, strong and robust support that will launch the start of G-5 operations. Only the availability of predictable and sustainable resources will make it possible to pre-empt the deadly strategies of terrorists and give the countries of the Sahel the means to take responsibility for the immense needs of the population. We therefore call for strong mobilization and tangible pledges at the next donors conference, scheduled for 14 December in Brussels.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the renewed commitment of the Government of Chad to continue the fight against terrorism through its contribution to MINUSMA and to the Multinational Joint Task Force to fight Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin. Chad will also stand beside its brother countries of the G-5 Sahel as part of the Joint Force, for which we once again ask for the international community's support.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister of Defence of Mauritania.

**Mr. Bhatia** (Mauritania) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of the people of Mauritania and its President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, I would like to thank the Security Council and express our gratitude for its ongoing interest in the security and development challenges of the Sahel region.

Mauritania is absolutely determined to fight robustly alongside its brother countries to combat

terrorism because we ourselves have been fiercely attacked by these forces of evil. It has cost us enormous effort and sacrifice to fight them and to have achieved a more or less stable situation today, despite the fact that we know that in our region we are never safe from this network. We are therefore pleased to be here and very grateful to the Council for the invitation to participate in today's meeting. As all the speakers have said, the Sahel region, and West Africa as a whole, is currently the focus of several threats, which, if not firmly checked, could threaten the stability of the entire region. Indeed, they could also threaten peace all over the world, because our region is located on the borders of Europe, and if it is destabilized, it in turn could destabilize a significant part of the world.

It was to tackle this situation that the member States of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) established and launched the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel in order to combine their efforts to fight terrorism together. That started some time ago, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the countries, especially France, that have supported us in our struggle to launch this Joint Force for combating terrorism. The Joint Force is beginning to mobilize. We are making progress in organizing it that is significant for an organization as recently established as the G-5 Sahel. That is why we believe that for this kind of venture to succeed it unquestionably requires the support of the international community. Without that it cannot succeed, and what it particularly needs is the support of the United Nations and the Security Council, which is why we asked for the Council's support at a very early stage.

We thank the Council for all its efforts so far. We requested that support in order to establish a legal foundation for the Joint Force. That is very important, since we believe that the Joint Force must act on a basis of international law. A resolution was adopted and perhaps in the future others will be, too. In any case, it is important to us that these resolutions be robust, as the Secretary-General has requested, and that they can ensure that the Joint Force enjoys the maximum possible support from the Security Council, the European Union, the African Union and the other relevant organizations. It is therefore important that the resolutions not only welcome the creation of the Joint Force but also support, endorse and provide it with authority to engage in this fight against terrorism on behalf of the international community.

The second point that matters to us is that the Security Council can provide support to enable the Joint Force raise the resources it needs to succeed, because this kind of effort obviously requires resources that the countries concerned are not always in a position to provide. That is why it is important for the Security Council to support us in mobilizing resources through the various financing meetings to be convened and bilateral assistance, as has been discussed. The Joint Force's requirements for its operations have been evaluated and are generally reasonable. We have various stages to get through, but despite all the various political and other kinds of support that the Joint Force has been offered, we believe that without the minimum resources it needs to fulfil the mission it is tasked with, it has no chance of succeeding. It will therefore be very important to continue providing support to the G-5 Sahel countries in mobilizing resources.

I would like to conclude by thanking the French presidency, especially Mr. Le Drian, for included this item on the Council's agenda at short notice. I wish France every success with its presidency and I thank all the members of the Security Council.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad of the Niger.

**Mr. Yacoubou** (Niger) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, here in New York, in the United States of America, I would like to pay tribute to the four American soldiers who died at the hands of terrorists in the Niger in the line of duty, weapons in hand, alongside our soldiers in the village of Tongo Tongo. On behalf of the President of the Republic of Niger, I would like to say that we share the immense grief of their families and of the American people. The Niger and its people will never forget this sacrifice. We would like to convey the same thoughts and undying gratitude to all the Nigeriens and all of our allies who have fallen on the front of a war that has been forced on us. The Niger is also grateful to all the friendly countries and to the European Union for their active partnership for security and peace in our region.

The speakers before me all agree that the security problems facing the Sahel today are direct and potent threats to the peace and security of the whole world. We must all be fully aware of them and act accordingly.

We have recognized the fact that this war brought on us by narcoterrorists is an asymmetrical one. I am

also afraid that our own reactions — of us, the States and the international community — are asymmetrical. For while the narcoterrorist groups are massively expanding their arsenals and strengthening their dominion over local populations, we do a lot of meeting but not much acting. It is true that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) is making progress, but not as fast or as robustly as we could wish.

During this time, the numerous attacks on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and our countries show that we are losing ground in terms of our balance of forces with the enemy, as well as with the local populations, who, with no strong or effective forces ready to defend them, are pledging allegiance to the foe.

As we said before the General Assembly and wish to reiterate here, it is the Niger's profound conviction that in order to guarantee peace, security and stability in Mali and the Sahel region, we must stamp out narcoterrorist groups, ensure the presence and authority of the Malian State over the entirety of its territory, and implement the relevant political agreements. We cannot and will not attain our goal of peace and stability unless the narcoterrorists and their financial sources are neutralized. Those who believe or imagine for one moment that we can learn to live with the presence of terrorists and traffickers do not understand the gravity of the situation. Those who believe that they are insulated from the situation in the Sahel are wrong. We are all affected by what is happening.

Those who believe or imagine that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) will fulfil its mandate without waging war on the narcoterrorists are deceiving themselves. The death toll of a peacekeeping operation that has already become the most deadly operation of its kind will continue to swell. It is already deploying 12,000 soldiers at the cost of almost $1 billion a year. Despite these figures and resources, and because we have given it a faulty mandate, the Mission spends most of its time protecting itself from the increasingly audacious terrorists. That is why an offensive force to complement MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane is essential and needed urgently. Such a force, we believe, is the Joint Force of the G5-Sahel.

We must speak the truth. Today, terrorists have their own territory in northern Mali. They rule territory from which they have killed 149 MINUSMA personnel and brought death to the Malian army and Barkhane, and from which they regularly attack and kill in the Niger and Burkina Faso. They rule territory from which they conceived and planned the attack on Grand-Bassam in Côte D'Ivoire, and where they will no doubt continue to thrive on the traffic in drugs, weapons and migrants that allows them to pursue their attacks against the countries of the Sahel and the rest of the world. I therefore call for an immediate jumpstart and acceptance of the reality. Each day that we squander is a day won by the terrorists. I must tell it as I see it — we are tired of counting our dead and our wounded.

Our numerous meetings must not fool us into believing that we are taking action. The only true and beneficial action is to contribute immediately and concretely to the operationalization of the Joint Force of the G5-Sahel. To that end, we need a new resolution with a robust and clear mandate, and above all a guarantee of predictable, sustainable and adequate multilateral financing. Security Council member States have the power and ability to make this a reality. I hope that they have understood the need and urgency of doing so.

The five States members of the G-5 Sahel rank among the poorest in the world, but we are among the most determined and the most attentive to our responsibilities to making the Sahel secure. Today, we have no choice but to carry the battle to the enemy in its heartland in northern Mali and to destroy the terrorist groups in their lairs. Otherwise, they will destroy our States. That is an absolute certainty, as it has already happened elsewhere on our continent.

Every attack and every victory of terrorist groups over MINUSMA, Barkhane or a country of the G-5 Sahel helps to attract new recruits. Hundreds more young people will join the ranks of terrorist groups so long as they sense that the opportunity to earn money or glory outweighs the risk of dying in an attack on Government or United Nations forces. The more of our people they kill and the more of our resources they steal, the numbers joining terrorist groups in Mali will grow ever larger. That is how Boko Haram developed in Nigeria and how many narcoterrorist groups are beginning to emerge in Mali.

We all know that, when compared with certain other operations and measured against the stakes that we face, the resources requested for the Joint Force of G-5 Sahel appear realistic and within our grasp. They represent

the costs of a mere few days of operation in certain other conflicts. Since we believe that all atrocities are equivalent and that addressing these threats calls for the same commitment and sense of responsibility, we hope that indifference will give way to the engagement of all, particularly the most powerful countries.

It is in appealing to these common responsibilities that we say that today is the time to act. Otherwise it will too late, too costly or simply too complicated. We, the States of the G-5 Sahel, will remain firm in our determination to wage war against terrorism. It is up to other States to play their traditional roles in time for the next international donor conference in Brussels.

*The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.*